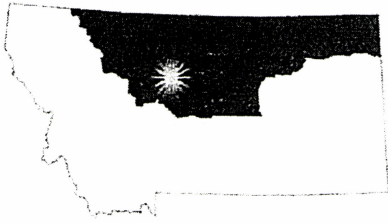


North Central Independent Living Services, Inc.



1120 25th AVE NE

Black Eagle, MT 59414

Main Office 406-452-9834

Toll Free 800-823-6245

Fax 406-453-3940

June 26, 2019

Members of the Children Families Health and Human Services Interim Committee:

My name is Shyla Patera. I am an Independent Living Specialist employed at North Central Independent Living Services, Inc. (NCILS) serves north central Montanans with disabilities. Many of us rely on Community First Choice and our Home and Community Based Services Waivers and System to live independently and thrive in our Montana Communities. These attendant care, home health and Community First Choice Services have been vital and necessary for me and so many Montanans . We, at NCILS thank the 2019 Legislature and Governor Bullock for passing and signing House Joint Resolution 50. HJ 50 provides for a study of Senior and Long Term Care division. We, at NCILS, believe that during the interim Children and Families Health and Human Services committee should focus on the services that consumers receive and how they are provided in Montana. Services and Service Plans offered through the Community First Choice as well as Home and Community Services should be based upon consumer needs rather than arbitrary service caps. When funding cuts are implemented there are unintended consequences and policies and funding levels become permanent. The services Montanans with disabilities need should reflect the self-determination rights of each consumer and for all Montanans with disabilities.

Senior and Long Term Care DPHHS and the Montana Legislature with guidance from CFHHS interim Committee need to expand HCBS and CFC service packages offered to consumers and families. The Legislature and SLTC need to ensure that not just funding levels, but that service levels are maximized for all services offered throughout our CFC and HCBS systems. NCILS also hopes that during this interim that DPHHS and the Montana Legislature will work on solving issues with the medically needy spend down This program allows Montanans with disabilities who are not currently working but would be SSDI eligible to spend down to the SSI level . The medically needy spend down is problematic for many

with disabilities because many Montanans must choose between current bills and personal assistance services. Often that bill involves living expenses. DPHHS offers CFC and HCBS waivers services and Medicaid is a primary funding source for these services . Montana needs to find ways to fix or remodel our current system.

Speaking of our current system, many seniors and families call NCILS because they or a relative desires personal assistance services in homes. NCILS advocates for the State of Montana to find ways for those Montanans who are Medicare eligible only and need Community First Choice or Personal assistance services to find pathways, so that senior Montanans with disabilities can access these vital programs.

The State also needs to plan for community living in its systems and services for those with disabilities who wish to transition out of Warm Springs and other state run institutions as well as nursing homes. DPHHS needs to enhance its transition services. DPHHS and HCBS waiver teams can benefit from passing a Housing Bridge Fund or Transition fund which will allow HCBS waiver teams to access housing expenses such as short term first months' rent and deposit expenses. We believe the DPHHS should strengthen its ties between Montana Housing and its agency so that we can help those who need to transition.

Thank you for your time.

Shyla Patera
North Central Independent Living Services, Inc.
1120 25th Ave NE
Black Eagle, MT 59414
ncils.patera@bresnan.net